

SIX RECOGNIZED REGIONAL ACCREDITING BODIES Definition/Purpose of Accreditation (Selected excerpts)	
Western Association of Schools and Colleges (Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities)	<p>Accreditation aids institutions in developing and sustaining effective educational programs and assures the educational community, the general public, and other organizations that an accredited institution has met high standards of quality and effectiveness.</p> <p>The Commission accredits institutions, not individual programs. Therefore, in addition to assessing the academic quality and educational effectiveness of institutions, the Commission emphasizes institutional structures, processes, and resources.</p> <p>The accreditation process is aimed at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assuring the educational community, the general public, and other organizations and agencies that an accredited institution has demonstrated it meets the Commission's Core Commitments to Institutional Capacity and Educational Effectiveness, and has been successfully reviewed under Commission Standards; 2. Promoting deep institutional engagement with issues of educational effectiveness and student learning, and developing and sharing good practices in assessing and improving the teaching and learning process; 3. Developing and applying Standards to review and improve educational quality and institutional performance, and validating these Standards and revising them through ongoing research and feedback; 4. Promoting within institutions a culture of evidence where indicators of performance are regularly developed and data collected to inform institutional decision making, planning, and improvement. 5. Developing systems of institutional review and evaluation that are adaptive to institutional context and purposes, that build on institutional evidence and support rigorous reviews, and reduce the burden and cost of accreditation; and 6. Promoting the active interchange of ideas among public and independent institutions that furthers the principles of improved institutional performance, educational effectiveness, and the process of peer review. <p><i>WASC Handbook of Accreditation (www.wascweb.org)</i></p>
Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools (Commission on Higher Education)	<p>The accrediting process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence...Accreditation is an expression of confidence that the MSCHE has in an institution's mission and goals, its performance, and its resources. Based upon the results of an institutional review by a team of peers assigned by the Commission, accreditation attests to the judgement of the Commission that an institution has met the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that it has a mission appropriate to higher education;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that it is guided by well-defined and appropriate goals for student learning; • that it has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized; • that it has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized; • that it assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement; • that it is accomplishing its mission and goals substantially; that it is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to accomplish its mission and goals; • and that it meets the eligibility requirements and standards of the MSCHE. <p>(www.msache.org/msache/content/ques1.html)</p>
North Central Association (The Higher Learning Commission)	<p>The process of institutional accreditation provides an avenue to utilize a variety of criteria to assess the effectiveness of postsecondary programs. The objectives of the postsecondary accreditation process are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a process for institutional evaluation • assure accountability in the use of federal funds allocated to the institutions • promote, strengthen, and assure the operation of quality educational programs for all students. <p>Accreditation by the Commission and by other nationally recognized agencies provides assurance to the public, in particular to prospective students, that an organization has been found to meet the agency's clearly stated requirements and criteria and that there are reasonable grounds for believing that it will continue to meet them. Accreditation provides both public certification of acceptable institutional quality and an opportunity and incentive for self-improvement in the accredited organization. The Commission reaches the conclusion that a college or university meets the criteria only after the organization opens itself to outside examination by experienced evaluators familiar with accrediting requirements and with higher education. The process of accreditation provides the accredited organization with an opportunity for critical self-analysis leading to improvement in quality and for consultation and advice from persons from other organizations.</p> <p>(www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org).</p>
New England Association of Schools and Colleges (Commission on Institutions of Higher Education)	<p>Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution or a program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality...</p> <p>Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: to assure quality of the institution or program; and to assist in the improvement of the institution or program...Increasingly attention has been given to educational outcomes as a basis for evaluation...Institutional or specialized accreditation cannot guarantee the quality of individual graduates or of individual courses within an institution or program, but can give reasonable assurance of the context and quality of the education offered.</p> <p>The accreditation of an institution by an institutional accrediting body certifies to the general criteria that the institution:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. has appropriate purpose; b. has the resources needed to accomplish its purpose; c. can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes;

	<p>d. gives reason to believe that it will continue to accomplish its purpose.</p> <p>(www.neasc.org)</p>
<p>Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities</p>	<p>Regional accreditation of postsecondary institutions is a voluntary, non-governmental, self regulatory process of quality assurance and institutional improvement. It recognizes higher education institutions for performance, integrity, and quality to merit the confidence of the educational community and the public...Institutions accredited by the NCCU are distinguished by their demonstrated ability to meet broadly accepted higher education standards of quality. The value of accreditation is not limited to quality assurance alone. Accreditation also fosters public confidence in the institution's ability to fulfill its stated mission and goals, facilitates student mobility between institutions, and enhances an institution's credibility with its peers. It provides effective mechanisms for creating institutional vision and enhancing programmatic and financial viability and effectiveness.</p> <p>Collectively, the NCCU strive to maximize the benefits of accreditation to enrich teaching and learning, ensure academic quality, and encourage continuous improvement. In so doing, we pledge to promote innovation, respect institutional autonomy, recognize the distinct character of individual institutions, and honor the rich diversity among the accredited institutions within the region.</p> <p>(www.nwccu.org)</p>
<p>Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (The Commission on Colleges)</p>	<p>Accreditation by the Commission on Colleges signifies that an institution has a purpose appropriate to higher education and has resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that purpose. Accreditation indicates that an institution maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degree it offers, and that it is successful in achieving its stated objectives...Accreditation enhances educational quality throughout the region by improving the effectiveness of institutions and ensuring that institutions meet standards established by the higher education community, and serves as a common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions.</p> <p>Both a process and a product, accreditation relies on integrity, thoughtful, and principled judgement, rigorous application of requirements, and a context of trust. It provides an assessment of an institution's effectiveness in the fulfillment of its mission, its compliance with the requirements of its accrediting association, and its continuing efforts to enhance the quality of student learning and its program and services. Based upon reasoned judgement, the process stimulates evaluation and improvement, while providing a means of continuing accountability to constituents and the public. The product of accreditation is a public statement of an institution's continuing capacity to provide effective programs and services based on agreed-upon requirements.</p> <p>(www.sacscoc.org)</p>